

1 Samuel 14:34-52 - Thursday, February 13th, 2014

- Last week we only made it to verse thirty-three, but tonight, Lord willing, we will actually complete the chapter, though it's taken us a month.
- Be that as it may, I'll give you the back story so we can hit the ground running in verse thirty-four, where we'll see Saul get even stranger.
- The whole thing started when Saul's son Jonathan and his loyal armor bearer miraculously defeated the massive army of the Philistines.

- Then, when it became evident that God had given them the victory, King Saul comes out from his pomegranate tree and joins in the battle.
- And, all the Israelites who ran and hid in fear at the sight of this enormous Philistine army also came out from hiding and joined the battle.
- But, Saul starts getting weird when he places the people under an oath with his oppressive fast, then even pronounces a curse upon them.

- From this we looked at 5 lessons Saul's folly teaches us the first of which is appearing spiritual outwardly to cover up the carnality inwardly.
- The second lesson we had learned from what Saul does here is the utter folly and futility of vanity. Frankly, Saul is a pride-filled narcissist.
- That tied into a third lesson we learned from Saul, which is the folly and futility of self-promotion, which leads to a self-imposed authority.

- That brought us to a fourth lesson that we had learned from Saul, which if you wouldn't mind I'd like to take a little bit of time to expound on.
- This because, it speaks to the folly and futility of not leading by example, which Saul does when he demands a fast and declares a curse.
- Last week I talked about the comparisons made between a boss and a leader, and I'd like to share with you a list that I have put together.

A boss blames others	A leader blames himself
A boss tells people what to do	A leader directs people how to do it
A boss criticizes	A leader advises
A boss barks out orders	A leader gives instructions
A boss demands respect	A leader earns respect
A boss threatens	A leader warns
A boss lays down the law	A leader shows grace
A boss depends on hearsay	A leader depends on due process
A boss drives people	A leader inspires people
A boss relies on authority	A leader relies on honor
A boss cares about profit	A leader cares about people
A boss says "I"	A leader says "we"
A boss says "go"	A leader says "let's go"
A boss creates fear	A leader creates enthusiasm
A boss demands	A leader requests
A boss knows how it's done	A leader shows how it's done
A boss will preach at others	A leader will teach to others
A boss will tear down	A leader will lift up
A boss will intimidate others	A leader has others imitate them
A boss is a disabler	A leader is an enabler
A boss is proud	A leader is humble
A boss will dictate	A leader will collaborate
A boss likes to talk	A leader likes to listen
A boss says "what"	A leader explains "why"
A boss discourages	A leader encourages

- That brought us to the fifth lesson we can learn from Saul. It's the folly and futility of making rash decisions on the impulse of the moment.
- For Saul to impose a fast and proclaim a curse is not only folly and futility, it's stupidity, this because, the Israelites need strength for battle.
- Enter Jonathan, who upon seeing the honey dripping from the comb stretches out the rod so as to partake of it and he's strengthened by it.

- The significance of this is the rod is a type of authority and honey is a type of God's Word, which is how we are revived and strengthened.
- It's also why the Israelites were not revived and strengthened in that, they feared Saul's curse and as such, they would not partake of it.
- Jonathan responded by telling them that if they had eaten freely there would have been a much greater victory amongst the Philistines.

- Not only didn't they taste of the greater victory they would also end up with a greater sin against God because they had become so hungry.
- The reason being is they rushed to eat the spoil they had slaughtered with the blood of the animal still in it, which was expressly forbidden.
- In other words, they had disobeyed God, vis-à-vis having obeyed Saul, such that the imposed law of man led them to break the law of God.

- There's an important lesson woven into the fabric of what they do, and it's simply this, if I don't first eat clean meat, I'll eat unclean meat.
- Because they didn't eat the clean meat of God's Word, they'd become so hungry that they'd end up eating the unclean meat of the world.
- It's at this juncture that we pick it up in verse thirty-four, where we'll see Saul, true to form, react foolishly when he hears what they'd done.

(34) Then Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people, and say to them, 'Bring me here every man's ox and every man's sheep, slaughter *them* here, and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.' " So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night, and slaughtered *it* there. (35) Then Saul built an altar to the LORD. This was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

- Here we're told how Saul, after blaming them, builds an altar to the Lord, and it's noted that this was the first altar that he built to the Lord.
- However, while this may seem to be right and even spiritual outwardly I'm of the belief that this is evidence of Saul's spiritual pride inwardly.
- Here's how I get there, Saul isn't the one to build an altar, the priest is, and for Saul to build this altar once again demonstrates arrogance.

(36) Now Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and plunder them until the morning light; and let us not leave a man of them." And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you." Then the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." (37) So Saul asked counsel of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel?" But He did not answer him that day. (38) And Saul said, "Come over here, all you chiefs of the people, and know and see what this sin was today. (39) For *as* the LORD lives, who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But not a man among all the people answered him.

- To say this disturbing would be a gross understatement for several reasons chief of which is what Saul says concerning his son, Jonathan.
- Here's why, for Saul to make yet another rash vow knowing full well that his own son Jonathan may die because of it implies that he knew.
- More specifically, Saul knew that Jonathan had eaten from the honey, and wrongly assumed that this was the reason God didn't answer.

- Unbeknownst to Saul, the reason God isn't answering him is because of him. In other words, Jonathan isn't the problem he is the problem.
- Be that as it may, this pales in comparison to the problem of Saul making a vow that he knows full well his son was likely to have broken.
- One has to wonder whether or not Saul perceives his own son as a threat to his kingdom and as such, is seeking a way to have him killed.

One commentator said it this way, "Strange perverseness! He who was so indulgent as to spare wicked Agag, chapter 15, is now so severe as to destroy his own worthy son."

(40) Then he said to all Israel, "You be on one side, and my son Jonathan and I will be on the other side." And the people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." (41) Therefore Saul said to the LORD God of Israel, "Give a perfect *lot*." So Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped. (42) And Saul said, "Cast *lots* between my son Jonathan and me." So Jonathan was taken. (43) Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, and said, "I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in my hand. So now I must die!" (44) Saul answered, "God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan." (45) But the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not! *As* the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die.

- Before we unpack this, I think we would do well to take note of how Saul has completely lost the respect and even the trust of his own men.
- The reason it's important we take note of this is that all Saul would have had to do to get out of this predicament was admit he was wrong.
- The problem is that Saul has to save face, so much so, that he's even willing to have his very own son put to death so he wouldn't have to.

- There's such an irony here because had Saul humbled himself and admitted he was wrong, he would have earned their trust and respect.
- Herein lies the irony, when Jonathan says to Saul, "so now I must die," he's the one who ends up earning their trust and respect as a result.
- It's for this very reason they come to his defense and show so much disdain towards Saul in their rescuing of Jonathan so he wouldn't die.

(46) Then Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place. (47) So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the people of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he harassed *them*. (48) And he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them. (49) The sons of Saul were Jonathan, Jishui, and Malchishua. And the names of his two daughters *were these*: the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal. (50) The name of Saul's wife *was* Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army *was* Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. (51) Kish *was* the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner *was* the son of Abiel. (52) Now there was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him for himself.

- The chapter comes to an end with a highlight of sorts on the strength of Saul, which may be for the purpose of bringing this to our attention.
- By that I mean the attention is all on Saul. Saul established his sovereignty, Saul fought, Saul harassed, Saul gathered and Saul plundered.
- Also, we're told of Saul's large family, which was a symbol of strength, then, we're told that Saul would take all the strong men for himself.

- Actually this taking of all the strong and valiant men for himself is a fulfillment of Samuel's prophecy to them, which we studied in chapter 8.
- The reason I mention this is because it will become germane to our understanding when we get to chapter fifteen, Lord willing, next week.
- Suffice it to say, chapter fifteen, like this chapter before it, is a huge chapter such that it's chalk full of so much personal application for us.